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E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: SOPM

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING DECEMBER 17, 1982

FOR ADDRESSEE POSTS' INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING
ARE EXCERPTS FROM TODAY'S PRESS BRIEFING. SPOKESMAN WAS
ALAN ROMBERG.

Q. DOES THE DEPARTMENT OR THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE ANY
REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS LOOKING FOR A
WAY OUT OF AFGHANISTAN?

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A. THAT'S A RATHER ING QUESTION. LET ME ADDRESS THE
PRAYDA EDITORIAL WHICH, I THINK, PROBABLY GIVES RISE TO THAT
QUESTION.

WE ARE ALWAYS ALERT FOR EVIDENCE OF THE SOVIET WILLINGNESS
TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WILL LEAD TO
THE WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR TROOPS, A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT
ALLOWING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT AND NON-
ALIGNED AFGHAN GOVERNMENT CHOSEN BY THE AFGHANS THEMSELVES,
AND AN HONORABLE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES.

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WE WOULD WELCOME CONCRETE SOVIET MOVES IN THIS DIRECTION. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, SEE EVIDENCE OF CONCRETE CHANGE IN THE

SOVIET POSITION AS EXPRESSED IN YESTERDAY'S PRAVDA EDITORIAL. MOREOVER, I WOULD NOTE WE ARE HESITANT IN ANY CASE TO TRY TO DEFINE SOVIET POLICIES FROM THIS TYPE OF ARTICLE WHICH HAS CLEARLY GENERATED CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS, IF NOWHERE ELSE, IN THE PRESS.

Q. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY SIGNS -- LEAVING PRAVDA OUT OF IT, FOR THE MOMENT -- OF FLEXIBILITY, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, BY THE SOVIET UNION, EVEN THROUGH THE U.N.?

A. WE HAVEN'T SEEN EVIDENCE IN THE POSITION AS EXPRESSED YESTERDAY IN THE PRAVDA EDITORIAL.

ONE OTHER THING I THINK IS WORTH NOTING IN THAT EDITORIAL: ON THE QUESTION OF HOT PURSUIT, OR PURSUING MUJAHIDDIN ACROSS THE BORDER INTO PAKISTAN, WE WOULD VIEW WITH GRAVE CONCERN ANYTHING THAT THREATENS PAKISTAN OR RISKS ENLARGING THE WAR.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SUGGEST WHETHER SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN AFGHANISTAN IN RECENT WEEKS AND MONTHS HAS INCREASED OR DECREASED, WHETHER THEY ARE BRINGING IN MORE
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MATERIEL AND TROOPS?

A. WE'VE INDICATED THE TROOP LEVELS IN A RANGE. I WOULD REFER YOU BACK TO WHAT WE'VE SAID ABOUT IT.

Q. ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME QUANTITATIVE SHIFT?

A. NO. I'M SAYING THAT WHATEVER SMALL SHIFTS MIGHT HAVE TAKEN PLACE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, AND I'M NOT SUGGESTING THERE NECESSARILY HAVE BEEN, SIMPLY MOVEMENT BACK AND FORTH OF REPLACEMENTS AND SO ON, BUT THERE IS NOTHING BASIC.

Q. CAN YOU ADDRESS PRESIDENT REAGAN'S LETTER TO MR. BEGIN, THE ONE THAT WAS CARRIED BY MR. HABIB?

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A. NO. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS ADDRESSED THIS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO GET INTO THE CONTENT OF EXCHANGES. THE IMPORTANT POINT CLEARLY IS THAT THERE IS URGENCY TO MOVE AHEAD AND TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES FROM LEBANON AND REASSERT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

Q. THERE WERE REPORTS FROM ISRAEL ATTRIBUTED TO DEFENSE MINISTER SHARON THAT THERE IS SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON ON SOME MAJOR BILATERAL THINGS.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THIS?

A. NO, OTHER THAN TO SAY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE GET MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE WITHDRAWAL QUICKLY.

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Q. WILL PHILIP HABIB BE HERE IN TUESDAY FOR THE MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN? THERE ARE REPORTS THAT HE WILL BE FLYING BACK ON MONDAY.

A. THAT MAY WELL BE THE CASE. I INDICATED EARLIER THAT I THOUGHT HE MIGHT WELL BE HERE FOR THOSE DISCUSSIONS.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THE REPORTED ISRAELI ARMS TRANSACTIONS WITH LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WHICH APPEARED IN THE TIMES TODAY?

A. YES, I DO, SIMPLY BRIEFLY TO NOTE THAT IN CERTAIN AREAS ISRAEL AND THE U.S. HAVE A CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA, AND NATURALLY WE WOULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF THOSE ISRAELI ACTIVITIES WHICH PARALLEL OUR INTERESTS IN THE REGION.

Q. HOW DOES THIS FIT IN WITH WHAT THE SECRETARY SAID IN THE OAS ABOUT TRYING TO SCALE DOWN LEVELS OF WEAPONRY, PARTICULARLY IN CENTRAL AMERICA?

A. WE WOULD HOPE THAT ISRAELI ARMS SALES IN LATIN AMERICA WOULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. GOALS IN THE REGION, AND I THINK THAT WOULD ENCOMPASS THAT CONCEPT AS WELL.

Q. DO YOU BELIEVE, ALONG THE LINES OF THIS STATEMENT,

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THAT REARMING THE TINIAN FORCES WITH ISRAELI-MADE JETS AND ASSAULT RIFLES AND OTHER THINGS IS CONDUCTIVE TO YOUR INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA?

A. I THINK I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, IN TERMS OF ANYTHING THAT INVOLVES U.S. COMPONENTS OR U.S. EQUIPMENT, WE'VE RECEIVED NO REQUESTS.

Q. SINCE YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT ISRAEL AND ISRAEL IS BUYING ARMS FROM THE U.S. AND ISRAEL IS GETTING A LOT OF ARMS

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FROM THE U.S., NOW IT LOOKS LIKE ISRAEL DOESN'T NEED THE ARMS FROM THE U.S., IF IT'S ABLE TO PRODUCE ARMS AND SELL TO LATIN AMERICA.

A. WE COULD GET INTO A LONG DISCUSSION, I SUPPOSE, BUT I WOULD THINK YOU WOULD WANT TO ADDRESS YOUR QUESTION TO THE ISRAELIS.

Q. NOW THAT THE SENATE HAS APPROVED THE ADD-ON AID TO ISRAEL, DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING NEW TO SAY - A REACTION TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE ADD-ON?

A. NO, OUR POSITION REMAINS UNCHANGED ON THAT ISSUE.

Q. DOES THE PRESIDENT FEEL AS STRONGLY ABOUT THE AID ADD-ONS AS HE DOES ABOUT SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS THE WHITE HOUSE HAS MENTIONED IN THAT CONTINUING RESOLUTION THAT MIGHT CAUSE HIM TO VETO IT? WOULD THAT IN AND OF ITSELF MAKE THE PRESIDENT VETO IT?

A. YOU WOULD HAVE TO ASK THE WHITE HOUSE THAT QUESTION. THERE'S NO QUESTION ABOUT THE POSITION OF THE ADMINISTRATION AS A WHOLE, BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU COMPARATIVE WEIGHTS ON THIS. DAM

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